

## Give Us This Day Our Daily Round: Glimpses of Resurrection on the Road

Luke 24:13-35

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On Good Friday last week, I found myself standing at the foot of the simple wooden coffin, the wind whipped up and nearly blew away my notebook of prayers. I'd been invited to officiate at the graveside service of a friend's father who'd passed away at 93 years of age. An honor that has remained with me at this unprecedented time when life and death seem to go hand in hand.

We sprinkled earth mixed with flowers over the coffin, as the treasured stories were shared remembering the legacy of love this father and grandfather left with his beloved family.

I stood 6 feet apart, a quiet witness to the tears, the stories and the shared humor. The cold finality of death was tempered by the warmth generated through our reflections of this giant of a human being. He graced the world not only with contributions to science but his own gospel ethic of mercy and the love of all things mountainous. This was an experience of Easter on the road even as it took place in a cemetery.

That is the juxtaposition we are living. Life and death, kindness and fear, pandemic and the seeds of immortality. Not too different from the Emmaus road conversations among Cleopas, his friend and a stranger that we read in the gospel of Luke today.

Contemporary poet, Lisa Mueller, writes,

*How swiftly the strained honey of afternoon light flows into darkness and the closed bud shrugs off its special mystery  
in order to break into blossom:  
as if what exists,  
exists so that it can be lost and become precious.*

This service has stayed with me as I do my daily rounds of Rogers Lake. Walking for me as for many of you isn't just a way to burn calories or clear my head as in ordinary times but has become a daily spiritual practice symbolic of the strange journey, we -- and the world -- are sharing. Each footfall feels precious, a way to forge a trail through shadow and light in this time of Corona.

As the days of isolating at home continue and the creep of COVID comes closer to our neck of the woods, I find myself walking farther and farther. It is a liminal time as it was for disciples trying to make sense of the world following Jesus life, death and rising.

In Luke's telling (all of the gospels have their own take on the post resurrection appearances of Jesus and this is one of two in Luke), Cleopas and a friend are walking away from Jerusalem toward Emmaus. It is Easter day and the road is long so there's plenty of time for their grief to be shared. Conversation is punctuated by the stunning news of Jesus' crucifixion, death and the

women telling the news of a rolled-away stone. The stranger in their midst on the Emmaus road is quite clueless. Though we know otherwise.

So changed is Jesus that they don't really get who he is until later that night when they sit down for supper. "Stay" they implore him. ("*Stay for dinner*" is something I wish I could say to our neighbors right now!) Ultimately, an offering of hospitality leads to bread broken and sight restored. Luke highlights the moment when "Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread." (24.35)

In the sharing of his very self.

The Lucan text unfolds in movement. The journeying becomes a time of action and reflection. We hear that after Jesus had vanished from their sight, the travelers returned to Jerusalem with hearts burning as they go and tell what they've experienced with the one whom they now knew to be the Risen Christ.

In their reflections, Jesus is becoming not just a figure of the past but alive in every step with their revelations on the road.

As these two friends on the Emmaus road show us, after their encounter with Jesus over the breaking of the bread, they walked back out into the world again, emboldened by a love that is not bound by death but lives on.

They became braver, remembered the teachings of love they'd learned, felt their hearts burning up with the truth of what it meant to *love neighbor* in the face of injustice. The sojourners are on a journey as we are...trying to find a way to fathom how to live in this new, changed world.

Something was set free in them during that moment at the table with Jesus. Their lives weren't over, they were just beginning anew.

What might be set free in us during these long days. What sustains you on this seemingly endless journey as the weeks pass by?

Who is sharing the road with you? Are there glimpses, of insight, of revelation that you might call resurrection?

And, how might we take these lessons of the road into the unknown future that awaits us tomorrow?

Like many of you, reading has been an essential enterprise on this journey. I'm rereading a favorite memoir, *The Long Loneliness* by Dorothy Day. The metaphor of the existential journey we are all on is one Dorothy Day related to in her lifetime of activism. (Note: Her fervor for the works of mercy, scripture, the world of the arts and literature nourished her inner world even as she gave so much of herself to the outer community around her). Day was a great reader herself and found friends in the works of Dostoyevsky and Dickens and among others.

A longtime journalist and activist, Dorothy Day catalogs her life from her early roots in the works of mercy as a child experiencing the San Francisco Earthquake. At that time, she witnessed her mother give away food and nearly all their clothing to those arriving on their backdoor. Day would go on to become a co-founder with Peter Maurin of the Catholic Worker movement during the apex of the Great Depression in New York City.

The Great Depression, like this pandemic we're living, had shaken the very foundations of society causing massive unemployment and skyrocketing homelessness. As I read deeper into her memoir, today's news came on and I learned 1 in 8 Americans, tens of millions of folks here and all over the world, are now unemployed.

In the height of the Depression, in 1933, Day and Maurin opened what they called *Houses of Hospitality* and soup kitchens throughout the city (which today stand all over the world. In addition, they founded a newspaper still going 80 years later), called *The Catholic Worker* remains at the price of 2 cents. Eighty years later it is still running. Just the other day, I learned my paternal grandfather as a young man was much devoted to Day's work and volunteered at the Catholic Worker in Boston, handing out their newspapers throughout the city.

Towards the end of her life, when asked by some students about what she hoped to be remembered for, Day cited all the folks who'd sat around her kitchen table saying, "I hope they remember that I tried to make them good coffee and good soup. I've enjoyed getting to know them, and admired their courage just from going one week to the next."

Day went on, "The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us?" Indeed. For Day, this path was one of personal and societal transformation, a transformation in love.

That wisdom is one that echoes into our present day. How do we live out our ethic of hospitality and inclusion when our doors remain locked and a gathering in person for a worship service or a Soup Bowl fundraiser feels light years away?

What does it mean to break bread together these days of physical distancing?

It is daunting trying to deepen our connections with one another and those most in need when a stop to the grocery store means being masked and gloved and fraught with the peril of floating germs.

These are questions to live into as Rilke says. As you know, we're experimenting as a staff and congregation with our digital meetinghouse. Our Ladies Who Stitch are spreading their enterprise of mask making to ensure everyone who needs one has a Middlesex Hospital approved masks. Our Sunday School is gathering in real-time on Sunday mornings to keep the momentum of connection and learning. And, Steve's weekly Sacred Conversations with guests like Paul Verryn this past week ensure that the place of true meeting happens wherever two or more are gathered on Zoom-- bridging the miles from Old Lyme to South Africa in friendship.

In spite of the debris of disease and the on-going pain of separation from one another, love in the time of Corona prevails. Barbara Brown Taylor in her book, *An Altar in the World*, is our church club read for this month. In it she chronicles her geography of faith and the spiritual practices and questions that make for a life of reverence. A hike in the woods is reverence for all things earth and sky bound and an encounter with a stranger is fodder for becoming more human. Simple but profound stuff and a reminder to me of the Emmaus roads we are travelling each in our own way and collectively. Each moment we are living through this Pandemic is a chance to see the holy again with new eyes.

The crinkling smiling eyes of an unknown neighbor waiting to enter the grocery store, azaleas rising pink in our driveway. Resurrection on the road.

Pulling out of the cemetery after the graveside service the other day, we drove home on hushed and empty streets. Empty except for the countless walkers, some masked, all waving to us as we passed by. The words of Dorothy Day come back to me, "We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."

See you on the trail my friends.

Amen.